MEN WHO MADE THE WORLD

Fernando Cortez

By DR. ELLIOTT SHORING,
NOTED HISTORIAN

WHILE THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH MONTEZUMA WERE PROCEEDING, SECRETLY THENE CAME TO CORTEZ TWO AGENTS OF THE AZTEC PRINCE, IXTLILXOCHITL, PRETENDEN TO MORTEZUMA'S CROWN. THEY ASKED CORTEZ TO HELP THEM OVERTHROW THE RULEN AND FREE THE PEOPLE. THEY TOLO HIM OF MONTEZUMA'S FEAR OF THE OLO PROPHETIC LEGEND AND GAVE DETAILED INFONMATION ABOUT THE CAPITAL CITY. CHAFTILY AND WISELY CORTEZ LAID HIS DARING PLANS.

CORTEZ NOW ACCEPTED AS ALLIES TWO CHIEFS WHO COMBINED HAD UPWARD OF FIFTY THOUSAND WARRIONS. NEWS OF THE REBELLION REACHED MONTEZUMA. STILL HE WAVERED ON TAKING A POSITIVE STAND. THIS CONVINCED CORTEZ' NEW FOUND ALLIES THAT MONTEZUMA FEARED THE SPANIARDS AND CEMENTED THE ALLIANCE FIRMLY. THESE AZTECS SAW HOPE OF THROWING OFF MONTEZUMA'S HEAVY RULE FOREVER TOGETHER WITH THE TAXES HE HAD IMPOSED AND THE HUMAN SACRIFICES HE CONSTANTLY DEMANDED.

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CORTEZ NOW ASSISTED HIS NEW ALLIES—THE TOTONAC TRIBE—TO DEFEAT SOME NEARBY ENEMY TRIBES. WHEN THEY RETURNED TO CAMP THE CHIEF MADE CORTEZ' CAPTAINS A PRESENT OF EIGHT BEAUTIFUL GIRLS. CORTEZ, TRUE BELIEVER IN THE FAITH, SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHRISTIANIZE THIS TRIBE BY DECLARING THAT HIS CAPTAINS COULD NOT GIVE THEIR COMPANIONSHIP TO PAGAN WOMEN. HE INVITED THE GIRLS TO BECOME CHRISTIANS. FRIAN BARTOLOME TOLD THE ASSEMBLED INDIANS THE PRINCIPALS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. THE GIRLS ACCEPTED IT. THEN CORTEZ, PRESSING HIS ADVANTAGE ORDERED HIS SOLDIERS TO OVERTHROW THE HIDEOUS IDOLS AND THE ALTARS FOR HUMAN SACRIFICE. THE INDIANS, ON THE VERGE OF REBELLION AT SUCH SACRILEGE, WERE WITH DIFFICULTY RESTRAINED. FINALLY, WHEN THEY SAW, TO THEIR AMAZEMENT, THAT THE SPANIARDS WERE NOT STRUCK DEAD BY THE GODS THEY HAD SO DESECRATED, THE INDIANS LOOKED UPON THE SPANIARDS AS GODS SUPERIOR TO THEIR OWN. THUS CORTEZ SPREAD CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

(TO BE CONT'D)

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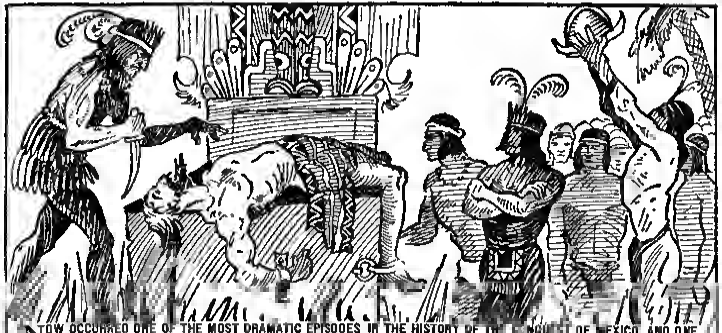
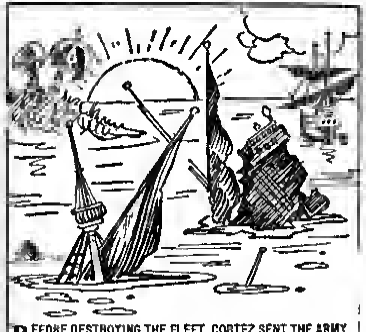
A VESSEL NOW ARRIVED AT VERA CRUZ WITH THE NEWS THAT VELASQUEZ HAD RECEIVED FROM THE KING AN INCREASED POWER. CORTEZ FEARED THE EFFECT UPON HIMSELF, AND TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION WROTE A LETTER TO THE KING OF SPAIN GIVING A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE EXPEDITION SINCE LEAVING CUBA. THIS LETTER WAS DESPATCHED TO SPAIN JULY 16, 1519. TOGETHER WITH



NOW OCCURRED ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC EPISODES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO, AND ONE OF THE MOST ASTOUNDING EVENTS IN ALL HISTORY. CORTEZ WAS AWARE THAT SOME OF THE SOLDIERS WHO [illegible] FEARFUL OF THE RISKS ATTENDANT UPON AN EXPEDITION INTO AN UNKNOWN COUNTRY WITH A DENSE AND HOSTILE POPULATION. THERE WERE FEW WHO DID NOT SHUDDER AT THE POSSIBILITY OF MEETING DEATH ON THE SACRIFICIAL STONE OF THE AZTECS AND FURNISHING THE MEAT AT A CANNIBAL FEAST. THE RESOURCEFUL AND DARING CORTEZ KNEW THERE WAS BUT ONE CERTAIN MEANS TO PUT AN END FOR ALL TIME TO FURTHER PLOTS. THIS WAS NOTHING LESS THAN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SHIPS TO PREVENT ALL POSSIBILITY OF RETURN.



BEFORE DESTROYING THE FLEET, CORTEZ SENT THE ARMY ON IN ADVANCE TO CEMPOALLA. THEN, HAVING REMOVED EVERYTHING FROM THE SHIPS THAT MIGHT BE OF FUTURE VALUE, THEY WERE SUNK. CORTEZ NOW JOINED THE SOLDIERS. THE NEWS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLEET PRODUCED CONSTERNATION—MUTINY SEEMED CERTAIN. THE SOLDIERS FELT THAT THEIR COMMANDER WAS LEADING THEM LIKE CATTLE TO THE SLAUGHTER.

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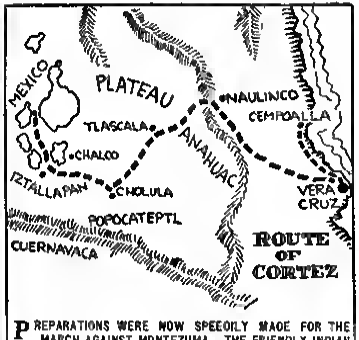
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SHIPS PLACED CORTEZ IN THE GREATEST DANGER HE EVER FACED BUT THIS BRAINY DARING, ADROIT, MASTERFUL MAN LOST NONE OF HIS PRESENCE OF MIND QUIETLY, AND IN A CONCILIATORY MANNER HE REMINDED HIS SOLDIERS THAT THEIR STRENGTH HAD BEEN INCREASED BY ONE HUNDRED SAILORS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN LEFT IDLE ON THE SHIPS. HE ADDED THAT THE VESSELS WERE UNSEAWORTHY, AND, IF THEIR EXPEDITION AGAINST MEXICO SUCCEEDED, THE SHIPS WERE NOT NEEDED, WHILE IF THE EXPEDITION FAILED, THEY WOULD BE TOO FAR FROM THE SEA COAST TO USE THE SHIPS ANYWAY. THEN HE CLOSED WITH A BURST OF ORATORY CONTAINING JUST THE RIGHT NOTE—HE FLATTERED THEIR COURAGE, APPEALED TO THEIR CUPIDITY, POINTED OUT THE GLORIOUS GOLDEN REWARD. A WAVE OF ENTHUSIASM SWEPT HIS HEARERS—THE GOLDEN MIRAGE OF WEALTH AND GLORY AGAIN DAZZLED THE EAGER EYES OF THESE ADVENTURERS. THE ASSEMBLY BROKE INTO CHEERS WITH SHOUTS OF "ON TO MEXICO!" "ON TO MEXICO!"



PREPARATIONS WERE NOW SPEEDILY MADE FOR THE MARCH AGAINST MONTEZUMA THE FRIENDLY INDIAN CHIEFS FURNISHED THE SPANIARDS TWO HUNDRED CARRIERS TO DRAG THEIR GUNS AND CARRY BAGGAGE, AND FIFTY UNDER CHIEFS TO ACT AS GUIDES AND COUNSELLORS TO THESE WERE ADDED ONE THOUSAND WARRIORS THUS THE SPANIARDS WERE REINFORCED BY THIRTEEN HUNDRED TOTONAC INDIANS.

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AT THIS POINT NEWS CAME THAT FOUR SPANISH SHIPS HAD APPEARED OFF THE SHORE, BUT REFUSED TO LAND. CORTEZ FEARED THAT THEY WERE SHIPS OF GARAY, GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA, COME TO NOTIFY HIM HE MUST NOT TRESPASS ON TERRITORY GRANTED GARAY. BY STRATEGY CORTEZ INDUCED A BOAT, CONTAINING SEVEN MEN TO LAND THESE MEN HE CAPTURED AND THEY WERE A WELCOME ADDITION TO HIS SMALL ARMY.

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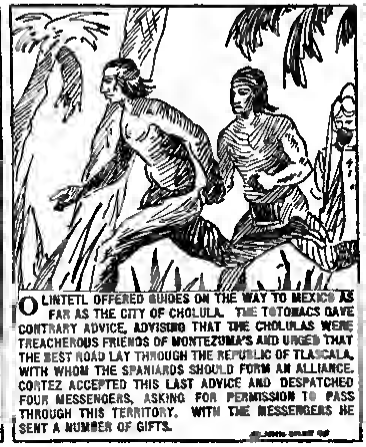
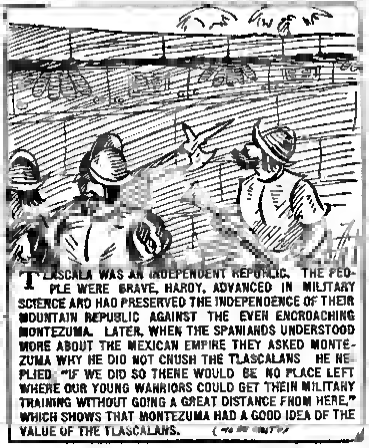
FINALLY THE SPANIARDS CAME INTO A LARGE, FERTILE, WELL CULTIVATED VALLEY, IN THE MIDST OF WHOSE PLANTATIONS OF BANANAS AND MAIZE, STOOD THE IMPRESSIVE TOWN OF XOCOTLA. THE CHIEF OF THIS TOWN, OLINTETL, WAS A MAN OF ENORMOUS SIZE AND GIRTH. THE SPANIARDS PROMPTLY NAMED HIM THE "TREMBLER" BECAUSE HE SHOOK LIKE A JELLY. CORTEZ ASKED HIM IF HE WERE A VASSAL OF MONTEZUMA'S AND HE ANSWERED IN SURPRISE. "AND WHO IS NOT A VASSAL OF MONTEZUMA?" THE IMPRESSIBLE AND ENTHUSIASTIC CORTEZ PROMPTLY EXPLAINED THAT HE AND HIS MEN WERE VASSALS OF A FAR GREATER SOVEREIGN. THE CHIEF WAS NOT IMPRESSED BY THIS DESCRIPTION OF A DISTANT SOVEREIGN AND TOLD CORTEZ THAT MONTEZUMA RULED OVER THIRTY GREAT VASSALS, EACH OF WHOM COULD PUT ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SOLDIERS IN THE FIELD. HE STATED MONTEZUMA'S WEALTH WAS INCALCULABLE, THAT HIS CAPITAL CITY, ON AN ISLAND IN THE MIDST OF A LAKE, WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF CITIES, AND WAS UNAPPROACHABLE WITHOUT PERMISSION, FOR BOATS COMMANDED THE LAKE AND COAST WAYS TO THE MAINLAND WERE DEFENDED BY MANY SOLDIERS.



OLINTETL OFFERED GUIDES ON THE WAY TO MEXICO AS FAR AS THE CITY OF CHOLULA. THE TOTOMACS GAVE CONTRARY ADVICE, ADVISING THAT THE CHOLULAS WERE TREACHEROUS FRIENDS OF MONTEZUMA'S AND URGED THAT THE BEST ROAD LAY THROUGH THE REPUBLIC OF TLASCALA, WITH WHOM THE SPANIARDS SHOULD FORM AN ALLIANCE. CORTEZ ACCEPTED THIS LAST ADVICE AND DESPATCHED FOUR MESSENGERS, ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO PASS THROUGH THIS TERRITORY. WITH THE MESSENGERS HE SENT A NUMBER OF GIFTS.



TLASCALA WAS AN INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC. THE PEOPLE WERE BRAVE, HARDY, ADVANCED IN MILITARY SCIENCE AND HAD PRESERVED THE INDEPENDENCE OF THEIR MOUNTAIN REPUBLIC AGAINST THE EVER ENCROACHING MONTEZUMA. LATER, WHEN THE SPANIARDS UNDERSTOOD MORE ABOUT THE MEXICAN EMPIRE THEY ASKED MONTEZUMA WHY HE DID NOT CRUSH THE TLASCALANS. HE REPLIED, "IF WE DID SO THERE WOULD BE NO PLACE LEFT WHERE OUR YOUNG WARRIORS COULD GET THEIR MILITARY TRAINING WITHOUT GOING A GREAT DISTANCE FROM HERE," WHICH SHOWS THAT MONTEZUMA HAD A GOOD IDEA OF THE VALUE OF THE TLASCALANS.